

MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S INTERIM REPORT FOR 1944.

The population of the town has not varied to any appreciable extent from that of 1943. The proportion of evacuated and self-evacuated persons has remained roughly the same. All private houses, hotels, boarding houses, etc., not requisitioned by the Authorities of the fighting services have been filled to capacity.

There was a definite influx of holiday makers during the summer months resulting in some temporary overcrowding. To some extent this influx was compensated by the school holidays, the scholars from the evacuated schools returning to their homes in considerable numbers. Such cases of overcrowding that occurred were of a temporary nature and were rectified informally.

The general health of the community during 1944 has not shown any improvement. The reasons for this are to be found in dietetics and other War conditions. A considerable factor is undoubtedly the shortage of domestic labour. The calling up and direction of women up to the age of 50 away from domestic labour has inflicted enormous strain and hardship on those remaining. The demands have been beyond their capacity and have had the inevitable result. The loss of that scrupulous cleanliness which has been one of the outstanding features of the rural communities has not made for improvement in health conditions. Fortunately there has been no marked outbreak of epidemic diseases and the health of the juvenile population has been well maintained.

Water Supply.

This has, on the whole, been very satisfactory the supply being abundant at all times and of excellent quality as evidenced by the periodical examinations undertaken by the County Laboratories. There was one exception; the small village of Woodcombe which comes within the Minehead area has hitherto drawn its supply from a private source. This source was shown by the Laboratory reports to be not entirely free from evidences of contamination. This supply has been superceded by a gravity fed water from one of the town reservoirs. The supply is now entirely satisfactory.

Sewage Disposal.

The sewage disposal has been satisfactory and no structural changes have been undertaken. Scavenging has been adequately maintained.

Housing.

The demand for houses is still considerable. My Council is committed to the Government's Post-War Housing Policy of erecting 52 houses in the first year after the War. Sites have been or are in process of being acquired. Three of these sites will provide 64 council cottages and six old peoples' cottages. Plans of the lay-out of the fourth site have not yet been prepared. The number of houses erected is yet to be determined.

Infectious Diseases.

Mild epidemics of measles and whooping cough occurred in the period and occasional cases of scarlet fever. Infectious diseases are treated at the local Isolation Hospital.

Disinfection of premises after infectious diseases is carried out by the Council's servants. Disinfection is also carried out after cases of an unpleasant or unhygienic nature on the recommendation of the attending medical practitioner.

With regard to scabies, only disinfection of the affected premises is undertaken by the Council. Cases which do not respond to domiciliary treatment are sent to a Centre for this purpose on the recommendation of the medical practitioner responsible.

The local institution, the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital, serves the town and the surrounding country for surgical, medical and obstetrical requirements.

The Maternity Department deals with all difficult labours and as many uncomplicated cases as space will allow. The accommodation, however, is strictly limited and a large percentage of the cases falls to the care of the District Midwives.

I am happy to report that this Institution has maintained its efficiency and answered all demands made upon it in spite of the gravest difficulties caused by shortage of nursing staff.

The Honorary Staff, although depleted, has at all times fulfilled its obligations.

Clinics for Infant Welfare and Ante-Natal treatment are maintained in the town.

Tuberculosis and Venereal Disease Clinics are held in the town and are under the control of and maintained by the County Council.

The incidence and mortality of Tuberculosis in the area remains unchanged.

Although the staff maintained by the Council has been considerably reduced by recruitment for the Services and much extra work entailed by Civil Defence measures, I am able to report that the efficiency of the Public Health Services has been maintained.

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Medical Officer of Health.

September, 1945.

